In places such as these in which women lose their attractions at M 595
an early age and in which men are decimated by the constant wars, the
custom of polygamy is a social necessity for the tribe which would
otherwise run out of members, and a physical necessity for the men M 837
and for many women who would otherwise stay single. Nevertheless there
are not lacking loose women, free in their favors, for whom the Indians
use the name of amoeccue.

The man is jealous and cruel to his wife if he suspects her of infidelity. While we were visiting the camp of Peilô we had the opportunity of hearing a husband, deep within one of the huts, beat and threaten his wife with death because she had been careless and fallen into the hands of a soldier. Nu-a-ilon-lâ (I shall kill you) he ground out between his teeth. On another occasion a woman, after her husband had been absent for two years, took up with another man; the husband returned, lay in wait, ran after and caught his wife and slit her belly open with a knife before the whites could prevent it. This woman did not die and as soon as she was well returned to live with her would-be murderer.

When the Indians intend to get married they dye their cheeks M 584 ●
and the region around the eyes red. The man will give his love a [302]
present at the time he makes his proposal and if the woman gives [184]
an affirmative answer the man gives her a dowry of whatever he has,
such as sheep, chickens, skins, etc.

If the families approve of the union the couple goes to live near one of them, should they not approve then the pair leave the hut and often even leave the camp. Once consent is granted, the nuptial ceremony is the act of consummation.

Among the Chiriguanos, when a man wants to ask for a girl's C 584
hand he places a bundle of firewood and a small deer or other provision
at her door; if on the following morning the woman lights the fire and
prepares a meal with the food supplied, the proposal is considered accepted and the suitor repairs to the table. Some people hold that this is also a Mataco custom, but the facts which I have been able to glean about the matter do not confirm this.

The Chiriguano chiefs, however, have a privilege, which is that C 584
they cannot be rejected by the women of their choice: this is a great 622
stroke of luck for them. The chief reveals his inclination with the offering of a piece of meat or some other thing; the girl cooks it, and they then share both meal and bed. The chiefs, especially the

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK6

are due — at least in part — to geographical causes. As to the Choroti, it is to be noticed that among them the women in general have great social importance, to such an extent in fact, that we may speak of a real gynaecocracy. This is in the first place due to the numerical disproportion between the sexes which, at least at present, exists in this tribe. The causes of this phenomenon are difficult to assign; there is for instance, no general custom of killing new-born female children which would account for it. Infanticide is indeed practised in the case of monstrous children and twins, but it has reference to male children as well as to female. Female children are appreciated perhaps more than male children, for the very reason that women are so few in the Choroti society. Whatever the real cause of the numerical paucity of the women, it is this fact which explains their social influence. Besides this, we have to take into consideration the strict division of labour between the sexes existing among the Indians. For instance, sowing and planting, the carrying of fuel, the gathering of wild fruits, the brewing of intoxicating drinks, and a good deal of other home industries are wholly or chiefly incumbent on the women. This to the Indians means that no man *can* successfully do work which custom prescribes shall be done by a woman. A consequence of this is that particular importance is ascribed to female work as such and that women in general are held in great esteem. From this point of view we must also explain the custom that a man who marries must go and live with his wife's family. It is mainly due to the reluctance of her parents to separate from her on account of the work she performs. Among the Choroti no compensation is given for a bride, because no bargaining of any kind whatever takes place between the members of the tribes. Instead of that, custom prescribes that the young husband shall render services to her parents, which is only possible if he stays with the family of his spouse for a longer or shorter time. In this way matrilocal marriage in the Choroti and other Chaco tribes seems to me to have originated, although the Choroti at any rate are not now aware of these services being really obligatory and a form of compensation for the wife. Marriage among them appears now as a wholly private affair based upon the voluntary agreement of both parties. But where a matrilocal marriage has developed, the children are naturally looked upon as belonging in the first place to the mother and to her tribe or clan, whereas the husband's importance as a family father is only secondary.

The same kind of »mother-right» and gynaecocracy also prevails, or prevailed formerly, among the *Mataco* Indians who, for instance, allow

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI 12

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the girl to take the first step towards contracting marriage, just as is the case with the Choroti. Similarly the *Tobas* trace descent through the female, but social conditions in the Toba society are more highly differentiated and the influence of the women is limited accordingly. The social position of the Indian woman and the characteristic liberty given her by custom appears in matters of love and marriage, a topic dealt with in the following chapter.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK 6

C 581 584

or whom she only wants for a temporary lover. Above all she wants as a husband a man who treats her well and possesses the qualities necessary to support the future family. Since the Choroti to a great extent live by fishing, skill in this art is naturally reckoned among a man's most praiseworthy qualities. Importance is also attached to skill in gardening and hunting. Consequently, when a young man is courting a girl, he tries to gain her favour by presenting her with fish in abundance. I was told that when several men are courting the same girl — which naturally is often the case — the man who brought her the largest quantities of fish had the greatest chance of gaining preference.

C 581 593

Thus among the Choroti, marriage is from a man's point of view an important matter. When the parents send out their young son to take part in the dances and to find a wife, they follow his undertaking with the keenest interest. Every evening the father shakes his magical rattle gourd (*pelite*) in order to promote his son's enterprise and »hurry on» the girls on his behalf. When the rattle gourd is used for such practical purposes the ceremony is called *nekeñlitse símā*, which literally means: »to shake the rattle to get (or obtain) something».

C 585

Apart from these ceremonies in connection with courtship, there are no particular marriage rites, except the necessary drinking-bout which accompanies all family feasts and in which only the men take part. The young couple are without any further ceremony regarded as married, but marriage is not fully complete until a child is born.

M [171] [562] 527 636 584

Among the *Mataco*, marriages are not particularly contracted in connection with the dances, but conditions are the same as among the Choroti in so far as the women play the active part both as concerns incidental amorous relations and marriages proper. The great drinking-feasts during the algaroba season are the occasions when a woman enters into temporary or permanent relation with a man. When the men are intoxicated, the girls avail themselves of the opportunity, seize the youths whom they like by the hands and take them to their houses where they spend the night with them. These liaisons lead in many cases to real marriages.

M 585 789 535

When marriage is agreed upon, it is celebrated with the usual ceremonies which have a religious significance. The drum, the most important magical instrument of the Mataco, is beaten the whole night with a view to keeping off evil spirits from the couple. Similarly, a ceremonial dance, called *Nahútsak*, is performed in the evening. It is a ring-dance much like the marriage dance *Avúshe* of the Choroti. The couple being married are seated in the middle of the ring and their friends dance and chant around

3: Metraux E-5 (1933) 1939 SI7 Mataco SI7

A pregnant woman must avoid sexual intercourse if she does not want to incur disgrace by having twins.

To avoid accidents and to facilitate delivery, pregnant women use certain medicines, especially the *litsitáx* root which they toast and pound into a powder in a mortar. They never wear belts or stretch themselves lest the child take a wrong position. The woman brings the child to birth in a squatting posture, she holds on to a stick at this time. Her husband and an old woman give her any assistance she may need. The afterbirth is buried and the navel is cauterized with the burning stem of a gourd. At the birth, the father picks up the child and it bears his likeness, but if ist is picked up by someone else the child will resemble that person. When twins are born, which seems to occur very seldom, one is taken by the mother of the woman and is brought up as her own child.

Woman cause abortion by using a certain plant (*nLoł*) which looks like manioc. The root is ground and taken with water. The sterilizing effect of this drug may last for two, four, or eight years.

c) *Names*

The name is given by the father when the child is from one to three years old. The father may dream of an animal, an object, a sentence or a word pronounced by one of the charcters in his dream, and this becomes the name of the child. A name is often distorted, a fact which explains their queer form. For instance *čalax* »black woman» has become *načalax* and *apan-toi* »bread», *hapʔap*.

d) *Marriage*

The suiter may get the approval of his future father-in-law by giving him money or cattle, but very often the authorization of the girl's father is far less essential than that of the mother. If she opposes the marriage there is absolutely nothing that can be done. It may happen that the father

584 chooses a husband for his daughter, but he would never go against his wife's wish. The ceremony is not celebrated. 585 The son-in-law lives first at the hut of his wife's father where he stays for three months at least, working for him. Later 591 he can build a hut for himself. The young couple live in a separate compartment.

Nowadays either the bride follows the bridegroom or he goes to live with her, according to circumstances. Ordinarily 595 men have only one wife, some have two, but never more. [593] Except for adultery a husband never beats his wife. Although 837 a woman is exposed to a severe beating if her husband discovers that she has betrayed him, it does not prevent many women from doing so. A woman will choose a day when her husband is absent and then send a child to tell her lover that she is alone. A couple must not be seen together for there would be some gossip. A man generally leaves an [578] unfaithful wife after beating her first. He challenges his rival and they fight with knives. The different »milks» [831] must not be mixed up.

XVI. Chiefs

622 All the members of the tribe follow the *cacique* everywhere without protest. As for him, he is responsible for all the members of his group. If one of the latter has committed [672] a theft, even outside of the tribe, the *cacique* will be arrested by the police. Quarrels among members of the same group [627] are settled by the *cacique*. If a big *cacique* is killed in a [726] fight his troop retreats immediately, even if the other *caciques* are still living.

XVII. War

726 In ancient times, when a young man was going to war, he pinched the skin of his thigh and drove the sharpened 825 bone of a jaguar into it. This operation was supposed to make the warrior courageous. Members of a war party did the same with a peccari's bone so they would be fierce,

832 use of all kinds of tricks and small stratagems to inflame desire in the men. It is during the dances held at night, more than at any other time, that one can see the maneuverings of the girls. The young men show more circumspection and have recourse to a go-between when they wish to make their passion known. They will send the girl they love a messenger carrying a torch or lamp. If the girl is willing she has only to follow the emissary.

584 It is not uncommon for the parents to take upon themselves the arrangement of a marriage. Should the union later be an unhappy one and end in divorce, one or the other of the couple will find consolation in saying: "I didn't want to marry, my parents are responsible."

591 In general residence in matrilocal, that is to say, the husband goes to live in his wife's parents' house. Nevertheless, it can happen, especially if the woman is older than her husband, that the wife goes to live with the man's family. But patrilocal residence is a rare occurrence.

[851] After the birth of a child, the new couple may build a separate house, but always in the woman's village. The Mataco young men of the Pilcomayo region who have married girls from the Bermejo have all taken up residence in this latter place.

606 Matrilocal residence presents the husband with certain problems I have heard young men complain of this custom. They said that their parents-in-law would take possession of the fruits of their labor and of the hunt It is not uncommon for a man to divorce his [586] wife in order to escape from the [13] tyranny of her family. Furthermore, the woman's parents are always ready to turn against their son-in-law should their daughter have some cause for complaint. A family always has something to gain from the marriage of a daughter for it supplies the aid of a man in the prime of life.

595 Polygamy seems to have been, in most cases, the prerogative of the chiefs. In San Patricio there was a chief with three wives. The erstwhile chief of San Andrés had two wives by whom he had had five children.

684 In a case of adultery the husband does not take the matter up with his wife but rather works out his rage on her lover. He may kill him or oblige him to pay indemnity. I know of a case in which a Mataco took possession of the wagon of another man who was accused of having had intimate relations with his wife.

5: Fock E-5 (1962) 1963 S17 Mataco S17

Mataco Marriage

By Niels Fock

This paper was written on a field trip to the Mataco, carried out under the auspices of the Fundación Williams, Argentina with support from the Danish State Research Foundation. I wish to express my hearty thanks to these institutions, and particular thanks to my professor, Dr. Kaj Birket-Smith, who has supported the expedition both scientifically and morally.

The Mataco Indians inhabit the western areas of the Argentine Chaco between the Rio Pilcomayo and the Rio Bermejo. They have for centuries been in contact with civilisation, but as a frontier tribe they seem to have built up a special traditionalism as a protective bulwark. Particularly the north-eastern Mataco at the central Pilcomayo have preserved their ancient traditions to this day, and the occupational system is still stamped by the collecting by women and the fishing of the men. The customs in connexion with marriage have to a large extent been retained unaffected to the present day, evincing many primitive features as, for example, the lack of any form of wedding ceremony. The contraction of marriage extends over a period dating from the girl's initiation until her first confinement.

The Mataco regard the initiation of girls as an introduction to marriage. This initiation consists in the girl's seclusion—or better—segregation from everyone apart from her mother. It comes as a prolongation of her first menstruation, and the long isolation is spent in continual work making *caraguatá* cord. It is considered very important that this work should be performed rapidly and well in order that an impression can be formed of the girl's ability as regards her main occupation in the future. As a rule the end of seclusion is marked by an *aleja* festival during which the girl looks around for a man. That same night she is able to take him with her to her home and allow him to sleep with her.

The girl being initiated is then called *enatska;* sexually and economically she is now ready for marriage. Normally several years will pass during which the girl may well search for a husband, but the actual result of her efforts is a series of sexual relations that seldom endure beyond a few days. It is nearly always the girl who takes the initiative for these short term adventures. At the village dancing-place where every evening the young men dance in chains or rings, the girls also

5: Fock E-5 (1962) 1963 S17 Mataco S17

584 make their appearance, and having studied the chosen cavalier join him in the
836 dance, holding him by the shoulder or around his body (Fig. 2). Either during or
[535] immediately after the dance the girl draws away her elected partner, taking him as a rule to the house of her parents.

302 The introduction to a pre-marital sexual relation can naturally take place in
832 some other manner. It often happens that a young man desiring a sweetheart paints a particular pattern on his face, a large red oval or circle containing small white spots on both cheeks. Everybody then knows that he is seeking a girl, and he is called *kyatikli*. The day after, perhaps even the same day, a girl will be seen painted with the same pattern. She is called *sanuklauli*, because by her painting she indicates that she accepts him. This method also shows that it is the girl who
836 makes the choice. He makes himself available both at the nightly dance and by painting himself, and she is free to accept him or to refrain from so doing. I was
[558] assured many times that a young man so selected has no chance of excusing him-
548 self; he would lose face if he attempted to do so, and would call down upon him-
[182] self the anger of the girl's family. A young man who is not chosen by a girl despite his wish can in the meantime console himself with one of the village prostitutes, who appear to have precisely this function, as extra-marital infidelity with a prostitute is regarded as valid unfaithfulness.

301 It has already been mentioned that young men and women seeking love can
832 often be recognized by the painting of their faces and by a general urge to adorn themselves. Also restricted to this period are a special broad armlet made of black and white beads, and—particularly for the girls—an ordinary white string of beads from which depend red woollen cords with bead tassels that hang down the
832 neck (Fig. 1). Young men who seek or have just found a sweetheart, traditionally
[533] evince great musicality, and are practically the only ones who play the Jew's harp
534 and a primitive musical bow. The music gives expression to longing and un-
[304] requited love. Young couples have a special form of caress, pressing the cheek of their partners with the points of their nails. This leaves behind small wounds visible for a week or more, and is proof of great infatuation.

836 When a girl has found a sweetheart no secret is made of the fact; at all events all the young people in the village will be aware of the various short-lived unions that have begun. But when she brings her lover home at night to her parents' house they nevertheless evince a form of discretion. The parents pretend to be asleep whilst the young ones creep in; but the father, as though by chance, may cause the fire to blaze up so that he can see whom the girl has chosen. He then lies
583 down to rest. It is often said of a young couple who in this way commence inti-
836 mate relations that "they have begun to be married". This means that they have commenced a kind of trial marriage the result of which is far from certain. The
[581] girl has primarily chosen her sweetheart on the basis of an undefined mixture of sexual attraction and other propensities, whereas the girl's parents wish to limit
[582] the choice to those economically acceptable. Early the next morning the new

5: Fock E-5 (1962) 1963 S17 Mataco S17

582 583 836 [415] [482] the carrying-net, as much as possible. On the way home he will not assist her to place the *yica* in position. She must seat herself in order to place the band round her forehead and then rise unaided. They then proceed homewards. If the girl has been unable to adjust the yica or to carry it home in one stretch, the man will leave her the same afternoon. A strong and industrious man is not suited to a lazy wife, and vice versa.

581 584 It was definitely maintained that even a strong passion was not sufficient to keep a pair together. Even though the initial choice—made by the girl—was primarily based on affection, the second choice—in which both parties and their parents participate—is the decisive one, and this is based on a number of sensible considerations of an economic and social nature. Here it is particularly the girl's father who plays the decisive part, but as a rule he allows his view to be signified to the daughter through the mother. The girl can flout her parents' advice and marry as she likes, but this type of marriage is not regarded as durable. Normally she follows the advice, and there were times when a father requested a young man to abstain from visiting his daughter. The motives responsible for this appear primarily to be of an economic character. The girl's parents desire [541] an able fisher and hunter as their son-in-law for—with the prevalent matrilocality —they will be very dependent upon a son-in-law's ability to provide.

581 [579] [684] In earlier days bravery in war was considered to be an equally important factor, but this is no longer the case as the need for it has disappeared. On the other hand the girl's father considers it important that the son-in-law should possess a balanced temperament. Irascibility is deemed to be a great vice, in Mataco eyes perhaps the greatest, and, leads for example, in cases of infidelity straight to homicide and blood feuds between the families. In addition it was 582 considered a bad thing to marry into your own band. It was never explained as a ban or incest, but rather as a foolish disposition, because one lost the advantage of having another band, *nikyé*, to rely upon in case of controversial questions. This natural need for strength has caused the Mataco to prefer band-exogamy, and, for example, in the village Yuto on the Rio Pilcomayo, 81 out 88 controlled marriages were exogamous. This system is also considered advantageous by the young men, for even though they stood alone as a stranger in the daily life of their wife's family, they realized that both they and their children might stand in need of aid from another, powerful band. Much suggests that the Mataco bands were formally more locally bound, so that a village consisted in principle of one or two bands plus foreign males-in-law, and one still often sees strangers, young men and girls, come to a village dancing-place in order to seek a sweetheart. [584] Nowadays, however, it is quite easy to find a suitable partner within one's own village because many different bands are now represented there. This mixing is particularly due to the general dispersal of local groups that took place during the Chaco war of the thirties, and a later coming together under the care of the British evangelical mission in accordance with quite different principles. Formerly

5: Fock E-5 (1962) 1963 SI7 Mataco SI7

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[177] Fig. 2.—Two Mataco girls electing partners among the younger men, who are performing their nightly chain-dance. Nowadays, especially the young men wear European rags. Flashphot. Fock.

Formerly,

582 it was customary that two bands lived close to each other as, for example, the satnáy and sitóy, and consequently the girls from the satnáy preferred to marry men of the sitóy band, and girls of the sitóy men of the satnáy band. The two bands became so inter-married that "the whole thing was like one band", and the [622] two chiefs were able to discuss questions of dispute. Here, therefore, developments had gone in the direction of forming temporary, loose marriage classes. The [611] descent rules of the Mataco are patrilinear, so that, theoretically, exogamy should not impede cross-cousin marriage. In the meantime, there is no example of this practice, the nearest case being a single instance of a man's marriage to a sister's daughter. These cases must presumably be understood as expressing a man's wish to preserve his original locality. This is theoretically only possible in a matrilocal exogamous patrilineal system by marrying one's sister's daughter.

583 It has been mentioned that a young man and girl who move in together [591] always move to the house of the girl's family. Here they merely dwell temporarily, [844] as a rule for about a year, so that the girl can give birth to her first child with the [585] advice and assistance of her mother. The previous sexual relations of the girl are [847] considered as trial marriages, but the birth of the child is regarded as the final [581] test, whereafter she and the child's father are deemed to be married. She is then called *enutsha tahnayéy*. Should a girl prove with child during a trial marriage,

6:Métraux E-5 (no date) 1943 SI7 Mataco SI7

forced the already uncounscious patients to swallow salt water and so to vomit the poison, but as soon as they came to themselves they struggled against the missionary in their will to die. Their resistance to care was overcome only with the help of several other persons. Both of them recovered but remained depressed for a long time afterwards.

Shortly after these events the deserted wife gave birth to a boy. She evinced no interest in the baby and wanted to kill him. The child's grandmother and other relatives, especially the women, opposed her intention and brought the baby to the missionary who tried without decided to resort to bribery and laid before the mother cloth and corn from the store, which he promised to give her if she suckled the baby. To this temptation the woman finally yielded. As soon as she had suckled the boy his life was safe, for a woman never kills an infant once she has nursed it.

Sixth case. Here the main character in the drama was Ipatsi, a 17 year old girl. She was an orphan whose sole relative in the village was a classificatory grandmother. She and her husband (25 years old) were incongenial and quarreled almost constantly. Then one day she poisoned herself. Her grandmother, who noticed the effects of the sachasandia late the same evening, sent a child to inform the missionary in charge. He arrived soon afterwards and found the girl conscious but very weak. She was crying hysterically. A few women who were standing nearby watched the scene in a detached way. Her husband sat on the edge of the bed, but seemed sulky and indifferent to her plight. Thanks to an emetic, she recovered. A few days later she departed from the her husband, despite the fact that she had given birth to a child.

Seventh case. Bertie, a boy of 14, ate sachasandia three times in one week and each time was saved by the missionary. He himself gave the following explanation for his attempted suicide. Teresa, whose case was described above, had cast her eyes upon him although he was distantly related to her. The boy's father encouraged her and insisted that Bertie marry her although he showed the greatest reluctance and insisted that he was still a child. Neither the girl nor his father would listen to him so that the boy had no peace and "could not sleep at night". At last he took poison. His plight aroused little sympathy except in his elder sister and, of course, in Teresa. The father died soon after the attempted suicide and so Bertie did not have to marry Teresa.

Eight case. The victim was a boy of 16 whose bright and cheerful disposition made him generally popular. He had joined the mission

avail to persuade the mother to receive her child. The missionary

/319 cont./

433 They do not work, plant, or do anything similar; they
222 are but mediocre fishermen and barely hunters. To live they
241 lay up great stocks of chañar, algarrobas, and mistol fruits, and with some gourd seeds placed under the earth they have extraordinary harvests if the year is moderately rainy.

786 They organize their orgies when the algarrobas, chañar,
578 and mistol are in season, and then the quarrels and murders occur
682 among the men; these crimes go unpunished by the authorities, for there are none. But if the one who has perished had relatives they will take revenge.

342 /320/ They do not bother to build houses or such things.
513 They make a kind of oven; for it they bend some branches of small trees, fix them to the ground, cover these branches with straw or grass, and they sleep underneath in a pile in the company of their dogs.

164 This is the reason for the excessive mange which kills
515 them and makes them look so disgusting, since they are not at all partisans of the daily bath, as the Chiriguano are, and when they do bathe, they roll about in the river sand or in the ashes of their oven-houses.

584 They do not seek the consent of their parents for marriage
585 nor do they have ceremonies. Do two young persons, a man and a woman, love each other? They leave the common settlement, go to the woods, stay a few weeks, and then return, now married, to live with their in-laws or to make another oven like the one of their elders.

586 Young people divorce each other easily, but they are
152 more constant than the Chiriguano in married life. Nonetheless,
837 the women are very jealous and do not readily consent to their
593 husbands' being with other women; for this reason they keep them content with the work of bringing them much fruit from the forest and caressing them.

302 Men and women cut their hair; some of them stain their
301 faces and pierce their ear lobs, in which they put a piece of wood, like the Toba, but this is not a distinctive mark of the race.